

***The following letter to the Editor to the Letter was published in the Birmingham News on July 4, 2008.***

To the Editor:

To achieve energy security over the long term, the United States will need to:

Expand the use of nuclear, clean coal, wind and solar power.

Further develop alternative fuels.

Increase conservation.

Invest in technologies of the future like hydrogen-powered vehicles.

But with gas prices at record levels going into this holiday travel weekend, Alabamians might rightly ask why more isn't being done to increase oil supplies through the development of our own domestic resources.

There are enormous oil and natural gas reserves offshore and in the Alaskan coastal plain. However, because of federal restrictions, fully 85 percent of the resources in the Outer Continental Shelf, to cite just one example, are off-limits to exploration. With high gas prices hurting Alabama's families, schools, businesses and manufacturing community, we can't afford to have valuable resources under virtual lock and key.

I am a co-sponsor of legislation to open these areas to responsible exploration, and I am urging

the majority in Congress to bring the bill up for a vote. The time for excuses is over. We should use this Fourth of July to begin to declare energy independence from expensive and addictive foreign oil.

U.S. Rep. **Spencer Bachus**

Washington, D.C.